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Weekly Situation Report on International Terrorism

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18 January 1978

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Approved for Release: 2018/10/01 C02596561

Approved for Release: 2018/10/01 C02596561

3.5(c)

WEEKLY SITUATION REPORT

CONTENTS

18 January 1978

Articles:

Terrorism in Argentina on the Wane (Page 1)

Montonero Efforts to Help Former Argentine President Leave the Country (Page 3)

NR

3.5(c)

3.5(c)

Approved for Release: 2018/10/01 C02596561

Approved for Release: 2018/10/01 C02596561

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Approved for Release: 2018/10/01 C02596561

Approved for Release: 2018/10/01 C02596561

18 January 1978

ARTICLES

Terrorism in Argentina on the Wane

Over the past year the security situation in Argentina has greatly improved. The best available estimates of terrorist strength reflect 400-500 Montoneros, 70-100 People's Revolutionary Army (ERP) and less than 20 Workers Power Communist Organization (OCPO) members. The leadership of both the Montoneros and the ERP is operating out of Europe and the organizations are in disarray. The OCPO has not engaged in terrorist activities recently and for the most part its members are in deep hiding. Not long ago a cache of arms belonging to the Marxist Leninist Communist Party (PCML) was discovered in Mar Del Plata. However, the PCML has not been involved in significant terrorist activities for over one and a half years.

The Montoneros represent the major terrorist threat. They are operating principally in the southern part of greater Buenos Aires, which includes the major industrial area. They have been trying to forge an identification with dissatisfied workers and to capitalize on the harsh economic situation. They have threatened business executives whose companies have become involved in labor disputes or who have laid off workers. To identify strongly with workers' aspirations through attacks against management is, and will continue to be, their main goal during this coming year.

The major limitation on Montonero terrorist activity results from their depleted resources. They have suffered major defections, in some cases of high ranking personnel. Many of these defectors are collaborating with Argentine security officials, making it very difficult for the Montoneros to successfully conduct operations. The strongest and largest Montonero column is column 25, which is operating in the southern area of greater Buenos Aires. It has 60-80 members. This column received a serious setback in December when its leader, Raul Motola, was killed in a confrontation with security forces. He was responsible for several assassinations over the past couple of years and last October concealed a bomb in a car which exploded in front of the house of Eduardo Beach, an Argentine executive of Chrysler Corporation. The detonation killed Beach's bodyguard and a passerby. Two others were injured.

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Approved for Release: 2018/10/01 C02596561

18 January 1978

The overall assessment by American officials on the scene is that Argentina is safe for U.S. tourists and for U.S. government officials coming on private visits. The security situation has also improved for American business personnel. They should be in no danger if they follow good security practices, avoid publicity and if their companies are not involved in any serious labor disputes.

Approved for Release: 2018/10/01 C02596561

Approved for Release: 2018/10/01 C02596561 3.5(c)

SECRET

18 January 1978

Montonero Efforts to Help Former Argentine President Leave the Country 3.3(b)(1)

the Montonero terrorist group intends to kidnap one or more Argentine ambassadors assigned to Central American posts. the Montoneros will use the attack to force the exchange of the kidnaped ambassador or ambassadors for Hector Campora, a former president of Argentina, who has been living in the Mexican embassy in Buenos Aires since the overthrow of the government by military forces in March 1976. if the Montoneros are unable to carry out such a kidnaping, they intend to attack and occupy an Argentine embassy in Central America. 3.3(b)(1) 3.3(b)(1)

Also during early January, a paid advertisement appeared in the New York Times which charged that the current military government in Argentina is violating international standards by "illegally" denying Campora a safe conduct to leave the Mexican embassy and subsequently Argentina. Under the Argentine constitution, certain persons charged by the government with political crimes may elect voluntary exile abroad rather than serve time in prison. The ad states that the international list of persons whose names appear as signatories "publicly address the military junta demanding a return of peace to Argentina through the effective enforcement of the democratic rights and institutions." It calls for safe conduct to be given to Campora "as a first and unavoidable step for the return of democracy to Argentina."

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